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THE GREAT DUST STORM OF 1986 (?); L. J. Martin, Planetary Research Center, Lowell Observatory; and P. B. James, University of Missouri at St. Louis and Lowell Observatory

The title, of course, is hypothetical since this abstract was written when we were only beginning our observations and Mars was subtending only 13 seconds of arc. At the time of this meeting we will be less than halfway through our observing period and Mars will have been at opposition one week earlier. Mars' closest approach to Earth occurs on July 17th, when it is closer than anytime since 1971, the most recent year that this season was seen on Earthbased observations. It will also be the dust storm "season" (see figure), the first 1977 storm began at  $L_s$  204°, which occurs this year on July 12th. If a storm breaks out before the meeting, we will give you as many preliminary details as possible. In any case, we will discuss current observations and what they are telling us about present atmospheric conditions and the recession of the South Polar Cap. Comparisons of this portion of the seasonal cycle with 1969 and 1971 Planetary Patrol observations and those from earlier years, as well as Viking observations, will help define both the differences and similarities of various Martian years. As the history of the Martian climate continues, we will endeavor to add to the data base.

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